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# THE PENANG TARO.

(*Colocasia esculenta.*)

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The Penang<sup>1</sup> taro (pronounced tah'ro), from South China, is closely related to the Trinidad dasheen and is one of the finest flavored of all taros. It is characterized in appearance by elongated corms, as compared with the more nearly oval ones of the Trinidad dasheen; and by numerous, delicate, purple-colored fibers which traverse the white flesh. The purple coloring matter is dissolved and changed in cooking, and gives a pinkish hue to the flesh. When cooked, the Penang taro has a distinctive aroma and flavor of which one soon becomes exceedingly fond. It is drier than the dasheen and when grown in rich sandy soil is usually more mealy. Because of its acidity, the uncooked vegetable should never be tasted.

This taro produces few cormels, or lateral "tubers," of marketable size, and the crop therefore consists mainly of the central corms, which range in weight from 1 to 10 pounds each. The variety is not a good keeper, and when corms are obtained they should be used without delay. If not used immediately, they should be kept in a cool place (45°-55° Fahr.)—preferably wrapped.

Like the dasheen, the Penang taro contains about 50 per cent. more of starch and of protein than the potato.

<sup>1</sup>Known also as Banlung and as Pat-long-fu.

The methods for cooking the Penang taro are in general the same as for dasheens or potatoes. However, on account of its extreme mealiness and the consequent tendency for several weeks after digging to cook to pieces in boiling, this taro is not usually suitable for plain boiling or scalloping until about the first of January. The following recipes have been found particularly well adapted for the Penang variety. Attention is directed especially to the recipes for filling for fowl and for the flaked or granulated taro.

**IMPORTANT NOTE.**—To obtain a fair impression of this delicious vegetable, one should get the *first taste of baked or boiled taro within one or two minutes after it comes from the stove.* Baking, as described below, is especially recommended for the first trial.

## RECIPES.

**BAKED.**—Clean the dry corm with brush or coarse cloth, parboil for 10 to 15 minutes (depending on size), and bake in a moderate oven. (Time same as for a potato of equal size). Cut large corms in half lengthwise, to reduce time of baking. *Do not overbake.* The delicate crust formed on the cut surface of a properly baked corm is particularly delicious. When the taro is done, *serve immediately*, in the "half shell;" or, remove skin, and serve in flat slices three-eighths to one-half inch thick in a *warmed, covered dish.* Eat with salt and butter or gravy.

**PLAIN BOILED.**—(Satisfactory only when corms are thoroly matured,—after about January first.) Boil whole, in the skin, and when cooked thru remove from water at once. *dry off* in a hot oven for 5 or 10 minutes and *serve immediately.* A large corm may be cut in half, peeled, and then cut into smaller pieces—such as the thick, even slices described under baked taro—and served in a warmed covered dish. Eat with salt and butter or gravy.

**FLAKED OR GRANULATED.**—Use cold taro, boiled or baked the day before. Peel, grind in food chopper with fine adjustment—nut-butter grinder for the *flaked* form—and sprinkle with salt (nothing else) while grinding. Heat rather quickly in chafing dish or in covered dish in hot oven; do not stir. Serve immediately eat with butter or gravy. Butter or cheese may be added to top after heating, and the dish,

browned quickly in oven and re-covered to prevent further drying.

**RICED.**—Boil (or parboil and bake) the taro, and peel. With a strong, steel-handled ricer, rice the hot taro in layers into a warm covered serving dish, and season each layer with salt. Eat with butter or gravy.

A casserole may be used for serving and the top of the riced taro dotted with butter or sprinkled with grated cheese and browned quickly in the oven.

**MASHED.**—Rice the taro, as in the preceding, or mash it thoroly; season with salt and butter, add plenty of heated milk to make beating easy, and beat until very light. The excellence of mashed taro depends upon the use of a proper quantity of milk and the thoroness of beating.

**FILLING FOR FOWL AND OTHER MEATS.**—Prepare the filling as usual, but use 2 parts of boiled and riced taro to 1 part of bread. This is equal to chestnut dressing and requires less labor in preparation.

**HASH.**—Prepare from cold boiled or baked taro, with meat and seasoning as for ordinary hash. The distinctive flavor of the Penang taro makes this hash especially delicious.

**CREAMED.**—Boil the taro, and, while still hot, peel, dice small, and add a cream sauce previously prepared. Cook in the sauce for a few minutes.

**SCALLOPED.**—Use raw taro, pared dry. Cut slices an eight to a quarter inch thick, and proceed as for scalloped potatoes. Sprinkle cracker meal or bread crumbs and a little sugar on each layer in addition to the usual seasoning. Less time is required in cooking than for scalloped potatoes.

**AU GRATIN.**—Proceed as for scalloped taro; but less butter and no sugar should be used, and grated cheese should be added to each layer, with bread crumbs on the top layer.

**TARO SAUTÉ.**—Boil the taro until done. Peel, slice, (warm or cold) into rather thick, even slices, sprinkle with salt and saute' (fry in small amount of fat) quickly, one layer deep, in a covered frying pan. Remove from fire *immediately* when only slightly browned, to avoid excessive drying, and serve at once. If desired, after salting, the slices may be sugared liberally and then saute'ed.

**FRENCH FRIED.**—Pare the dry, raw taro, cut into square strips, and fry to a straw color (not brown) in deep fat. Serve immediately. Previously boiled or baked taro also may be French fried.



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